



# Simple Guide to SrlvaishNavam

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## Pronunciation guide

- A is used for “aa” sound – example: emperumAnAr, rAmAnuja
- E is used for “yay” sound – example: EkAdhasi
- I is used for “ee” sound – example: ISvara. "ee" is also used at times, when the word contains both "I" and "I" as in the case of IIIA - it will be written as leelA (to avoid confusion)
- O is used for “Oh” sound – example: Om
- U is used for “oo” sound – example: Urdhva pundram
- zh is used for very strong “l” sound – example: AzhwAr
- L is used for strong “l” sound – example: muL (thorn)
- N is used for strong “n” sound – example: nArAyaNa
- R is used for strong “r” sound - example: puRappAdu (procession); its also used for "tr" sound in thamizh when there is double "R" - example: uRRAr (utRAR - relative)
- d is used strong “d” sound – example: garuda
- dh is used for meek “d” sound – example: gOvindhA
- t is used for strong “t” sound – example: ganta
- th is used for meek “t” sound – example: vratham
- b is used for meek “b” sound – example: budhdhi
- bh is used for strong “b” sound – example: bhakthi
- sa, sha, ksha are typed as it is – examples: samskritham, shashti and kshamA
- S is used for strong “s” sound – example SEsha, kESava
- : is used for ha sound in samskritham words – examples: nama: to be said as namaha



Our AzhwArs and AchAryas have showed us two great treasures - archAvathAra emperumAns and granthams (dhivya prabandham, sthOthrams, vyAkyAnams, rahasya granthams etc). We strive to provide access to both - emperumAn and granthams, and the AzhwArs/AchAryas, through our website portal (<http://koyil.org>). As part of this initiative, we are presenting printed books for the benefit of everyone. We request and encourage everyone to make use of this opportunity and

- get these books for oneself and develop/refresh one's own knowledge
- get these books in bulk and place them in their AchArya's mutt/thirumALigai, so that the AchArya can give a copy of these books to those who become Sishyas. These books can be studied by Sishyas and any doubts can be clarified by the AchArya himself - thus leading to an enriching relationship between AchArya and Sishya.
- share them with others as a compliment during SrlvaishNava festivals, functions at home etc and gift them to friends/relatives during functions and important events at their homes
- think about many other creative ways of sharing/spreading knowledge

Reading the principles explained by our pUrvAchAryas in simple language will make us gain knowledge about our sampradhAyam and will also stimulate the taste for progressing further such as learning the literature in depth through upanyAsams, kAlakshEpams etc under qualified scholars and engaging in various kainkaryams.

**With the intent of spreading this divine knowledge far and wide to reach all SrlvaishNavas and those who are aspiring to become a SrlvaishNava, we only expect a minimum donation that covers the cost to print the books. Courier/postage charges will be extra.**

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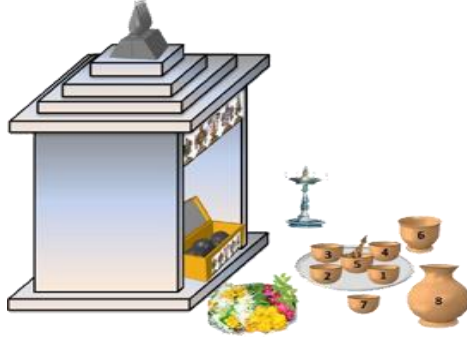
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## Basics of SrlvaishNavam

For SrlvaishNavas, the following points are very useful to understand and practice in their lives on a day-to-day basis.



1. Respect SrlvaishNavas irrespective of their varNam, ASramam, gyAnam, etc. Respect towards fellow bhAgavathas is bhagavAn's first expectation from his devotees.
2. Lead a simple life devoid of ego and possessiveness. Once we realize the miniscule nature of the AthmA (self) and the grandeur nature of bhagavAn, we can never think great about ourselves.
3. Regular interaction with one's own AchArya is a very important aspect. It is important and mandated for the Sishya to help his AchArya in physical, financial needs as much as possible.
4. Perform nithya karmAnushtAnams such as snAnam, Urdhva puNdra dhAraNam, sandhyAvandhanam etc., according to one's own varNam and ASramam. Through performance of such ordained activities, one develops internal and external purity which will lead to sustenance and nurturing of true knowledge.
5. Always wear thirumaN and SrlchUrNam (thilak) - this is our primary identity of our servitorship towards bhagavAn. It is most important to wear it boldly at all circumstances and never feel ashamed of it.
6. Wear traditional clothes panchakachcham, madisAr etc., as per one's gender, varNam, ASramam. There is nothing to feel shy about being who we are and what our culture is – especially coming in the great lineage of AchAryas.
7. Always engage in worshiping Srlman nArAyaNan, AzhwArs and AchAryas. On the contrary avoid worshiping dhEvathAntharams (dhEvi dhEvathAs - dhEvathAs such as rudhra parivAr, indhra, varuNa, agni,

navagrahams, etc). This is one of the most important principles highlighted by our pUrvAchAryas. One of the main relationships between bhagavAn and jlvAthmA is bharthru-bhAryA (husband-wife) relationship. Since all jlvAthmAs are feminine in nature and bhagavAn is the singular masculine entity, all jlvAthmAs have this common relationship with bhagavAn. So, it is imperative for one to manifest faithfulness towards bhagavAn at all times and avoid any relationships with dhEvathAntharams.

8. thiruvArAdhanam at home is an important aspect in a SrlvaishNava's daily routine. emperumAn has mercifully descended into our own homes to accept our worship. It is a great insult to ignore him and will be very detrimental for ones own spiritual progress to ignore perumAL at home. Even while we are travelling, it is best to carry the thiruvArAdhana perumAL also with us. If that is not possible, at least adequate arrangements should be made to ensure proper thiruvArAdhanam for him either at our own home by SrlvaishNavas or by placing him in other SrlvaishNavas' homes. It is completely disrespectful to leave him locked in the home without daily thiruvArAdhanam. There is a detailed discussion on thiruvArAdhanam at <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/07/srivaishnava-thiruvaaraadhanam.html>.
9. Always consume those food materials that are allowed in SAsthrAm based on one's own varNam and ASramam. Such food stuff should first be offered to emperumAn, AzhwArs and AchAryas and then only be consumed. We should never consume such foods that are not offered to emperumAn. There is a detailed discussion on AhAra niyamam at [http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/07/srivaishnava-aahaara-niyamam\\_28.html](http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/07/srivaishnava-aahaara-niyamam_28.html) and <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/08/srivaishnava-ahara-niyamam-q-a.html>.
10. Seek out the association of SrlvaishNavas. It is important to engage with meaningful spiritual conversations that will uplift us and help us in our spiritual progress.
11. dhivya dhEsams, AzhwAr/AchArya avathAra sthalams and abhimAna sthalams are important parts of our life. One should lead a life of service in dhivya dhEsams and so on. If the circumstances are not right presently to be engaged in such service, try to visit such holy places frequently and also plan for such setup in the future.
12. dhivya prabandham is the most important aspect for SrlvaishNavas. Learning the pASurams, understanding the meanings of the same (according to pUrvAchAryas' explanations) and putting those principles in to practice are the 3 most important aspects which

define a SrlvaishNava. dhivya prabandham develops detachment towards worldly matters and attachment towards bhagavAn and bhAgvathAs.

13. The lives of our pUrvAchAryas are by themselves the greatest source of learning and inspiration for us. They have demonstrated utmost dignity and compassion towards all beings and all the situations/dilemmas that we come across today are addressed clearly in their lives.
14. Study of pUrvAchArya literature is most important. One should allocate some time on a daily basis to plunge into the greatest available treasure, i.e., pUrvAchArya literature in the form of vEdhAntham, dhivya prabandham, sthOthra granthams, vyAkyAnams, historical depictions, etc. There is plenty of such information available in our websites (<http://koyil.org/index.php/portal/>) for reading.
15. Listening to kAlakshEpams (lectures of commentaries with source text) under scholars is most important to get thorough understanding of the essential principles. Nowadays, there are many lectures available in CDs and websites. For those who cannot attend these lectures personally, they can make use of such resources that are available. Even while listening from home, one should try to be in proper attire and listen to these lectures with attention as it would be done in physical presence.
16. Engage in some meaningful kainkaryam. SAsthram says “servitorship becomes devoid when there is no service” – as a servitor of Srlman nArAyaNan, AzhwArs and AchAryas, one should always engage in some service. It can be physical, monetary, intellectual etc. There are so many ways to engage in service. There is also so much demand for those who are interested in kainkaryam. One should always commit to some service which is recurring and fulfill that too. This way, there is constant engagement with bhagavAn and bhAgavathas.
17. Help fellow bhAgavathas and others in acquiring this most wonderful knowledge about bhagavAn, AzhwArs and AchAryas. Constant engagement in sharing such knowledge is mutually beneficial and enjoyable for both the speaker and listener. Our pUrvAchAryas have set a wonderful precedent by sharing many divine literature for the sole purpose of uplifting everyone through true knowledge. It is the duty of all of us to also study them carefully under proper guidance and then share the same with our family, relatives, friends and all those who desire for such knowledge.
18. Finally, one should constantly long for the eternal blissful life in parama padham which is fully fitting for the true nature of the soul. A



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real SrlvaishNava would never fear death for that which leads to the eternal service to bhagavAn in the most magnificent SrlvaikuNtam. Our AzhwArs and AchAryas always served bhagavAn and bhAgavathas when present here and desired to continue the same after reaching parama padham also.



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## Preface

Srl:

SrlmathE SatakOpAya nama:

SrlmathE rAmAnujAya nama:

Srlmath varavaramunayE nama:



SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam is a very vast ocean of auspicious aspects. This sampradhAyam was initiated by Srlman nArAyaNan himself and subsequently propagated by AzhwArs and AchAryas.

Our sath sampradhAyam is built on the principles of ubhaya vEdhAntham, viz., samskritha and dhrAvida vEdhAntham. The lives and instructions of our AchAryas play a vital role in understanding the principles and conduct ourselves in this path.

This is an attempt to present such essential and fundamental principles in a very simple manner in a series of articles. Let us see them one by one. First, it is important to have a good grasp of the terms that are commonly used in sampradhAyam literature. So, we shall start with the reader's guide which lists such terms with some basic explanations.

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## 1. Reader's guide/glossary



### Pronunciation:

- A is used for “aa” sound – example: emperum**An**Ar, r**Am**Anuja
- E is used for “yay” sound – example: **Ek**Adhasi
- I is used for “ee” sound – example: Iswara
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- t is used for strong “t” sound – example: gan**t**a
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- Sa is used for strong “s” sound – examples **S**araNAgathi, **S**Asthram
- : is used for ha sound in samskritham words – examples: nama: to be said as namaha, hari: to be said as harihi

### Basic Technical terms (SrlvaishNava paribhAshai):

- AchArya, guru – spiritual master – generally relates to one who gives thirumanthra upadhEsam
- sishya – disciple

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- bhagavAn – Srlman nArAyaNan
- archai/archA – emperumAn's merciful form as divine vigrahams in temples, mutts, homes
- emperumAn, perumAL, Iswara – My Lord, bhagavAn
- emperumAnAr – more compassionate than emperumAn – Srl rAmAnuja
- pirAn – one who gives favours or one who helps
- pirAtti, thAyAr – Srl mahAlakshmi
- mUlavar – emperumAn's deities that are consecrated inside the temple in an immovable state
- uthsavar – emperumAn's deities that are carried out in the streets for processions, etc
- AzhwArs – vaishNava saints who were fully blessed by bhagavAn and lived towards the end of dhvApara yugam to the beginning of kali yugam in dhakshiNa (south) bhAratham. AzhwAr also means one who is immersed in devotion.
- pUrvAchAryas – spiritual masters coming in the SrlvaishNava tradition from srlman nArAyaNan
- bhAgavathas, SrlvaishNavas – one who is a servant of bhagavAn
- araiyars – SrlvaishNavas who sing dhivya prabhandham with music and postures in front of bhagavAn
- OrAN vazhi AchAryas – A selected set of AchAryas from periya perumAL to maNavALa mAmunigaL – who lead the sampradhAyam one after another.
  - periya perumAL
  - periya pirAtti
  - sEnai mudhaliAr
  - nammAzhwAr
  - nAthamunigaL
  - uyyakkondAr
  - maNakkAL nambi
  - ALavandhAr (yAmunAchArya)
  - periya nambi
  - emperumAnAr (bhagavath rAmAnuja)
  - embAr
  - bhattar
  - nanjlyar
  - nampiLLai

- vadakku thiruvIdhi piLLai
- piLLai IOkAchAryar
- thiruvAimozhi piLLai
- azhagiya manavALa mAmunigal (Srl varavaramuni)
- dhivya prabhandham – AzhwArs pAsurams also known as aruLicheyal
- dhivya dhampathi – Divine couple – Srlman nArAyaNan and Srl mahAlakshmi
- dhivya dhEsam – kshEthrams of bhagavAn that is glorified by AzhwArs
- dhivya sUkthi, Srl sUkthi – words of bhagavAn/AzhwArs/AchAryas
- abhimAna sthalams – kshEthrams of bhagavAn which were dear to pUrvAchAryas
- pAsuram – verse/SIOkam
- padhigam – decad (a collection of 10 pAsurams)
- paththu – centum (a collection of 100 pAsurams)
- General terms – specific meanings (these are commonly used SrIvaishNava terms)
  - kOyil – Srlrangam
  - thirumalai – thiruvEnkatam, thirumAlirunchOlai is also said as thirumalai
  - perumAL kOyil – kAnchipuram
  - perumAL – Srl rAma
  - iLaya perumAL – lakshmaNa
  - periya perumAL – SrlranganAthan (mUlavAr)
  - namperumAL – SrlranganAthan (uthsavar)
  - AzhwAr – nammAzhwAr
  - swAmy – Srl rAmAnuja
  - jlyar, periya jlyar – maNavALa mAmunigAL
- svarUpam – true nature
- rUpam – form
- guNam – auspicious quality/attribute
  - parathvam – supremacy

- saulabhyam – easy accessibility
- sauseelyam – magnanimity
- saundharyam – bodily beauty
- vAthsalyam – motherly forbearance
- mAdhuryam – sweetness
- krupai, karuNai, dhayA, anukampA – mercy, grace, kindness
- SASThram – authentic scriptures which guide our actions – vEdham, vEdhAntham, pAncharAthram, ithihAsams, purANams, AzhwArs' dhivya prabhandhams, AchAryas' works – sthOthrams, vyAkyANams.
- karma – action. Also closely related to puNya (virtues) and pApa (vices/sins).
- mOksham – liberation – to be freed from bondage
  - bhagavath kinkarya mOksham – being eternally engaged in kinkaryam in paramapadham after being freed from bondage
  - kaivalyam – enjoying the self eternally after being freed from bondage
- karma yOGam, gyAna yOGam, bhakthi yOGam – ways through which one can reach bhagavAn
- prapaththi, SaraNagathi – total surrender – accepting bhagavAn as the only way to achieve him. prapannas that have taken refuge at an AchArya's lotus feet are called AchArya nishtars.
- AchArya nishtai – being totally surrendered to AchArya
- AchArya abimAnam – being cared affectionately by the AchArya
- pancha samskAram (samAsrayaNam) – purificatory process to prepare a person to be engaged in kinkaryam (both in this samsram and paramapadham)- includes following five aspects
  - **thApa (heat)** – Sanka chakra lAnchanam – heated impression of Sanka and chakra on our shoulders. This identifies that we are property of emperumAn – just like a vessel is marked with the symbols of the owner, we are marked with the symbols of emperumAn.

- **puNDra (symbol)** – dvAdhASa Urdhva puNDra dhAraNam – wearing of Urdhva puNDram (thirumaN and SrlchUrNam) in twelve parts of the body.
- **nAma (name) – dhAsya nAmam** – a new name given by the AchArya (rAmAnuja dhAsan, madhurakavi dhAsan, SrlvaishNava dhAsan).
- **manthra – manthrOpadhESam** – learning the secret manthra from the AchAryan; manthram means that which relieves the chanter from grief – thirumanthram, dhvayam and charamasloka which releases us from samsAra. Please see <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2015/12/rahasya-thrayam.html> for more details.
- **yAga – dhEva pUjA** – learning the thiruvArAdhanam process
- kainkaryam – service to bhagavAn, AzhwArs, AchAryas, bhAgavathas
- thiruvArAdhanam – worship of emperumAn (pUjA)
- thiruvuLLam – divine heart/desire
- SEshi – master
- SEsha – servant
- SEshathvam – being ready to serve emperumAn anytime (like lakshmaNa who was always willing to serve Srl rAma)
- pArathanthriyam – being at the total disposal of emperumAn (like bharathAzhwAn who obeyed Srl rAma at all times and even accepted to stay in separation from Srl rAma) and his devotees.
- svAthanthriyam – being independent
- purushakAram – recommendation/pacifying – Srl mahAlakshmi is considered as the one who recommends to emperumAn that jlvAthmAs are accepted even if they are not qualified. AchAryas are considered as pirAtti's (Srl mahAlakshmi) representative in this world. The person who performs purushakAram mainly requires 3 qualities
  - krupai – mercy on the suffering jlvAthmAs
  - pArathanthriyam – total dependence on bhagavAn
  - ananyArhathvam – completely being at bhagavAn's disposal
- anya SEshathvam – to be serving anyone other than bhagavAn and bhAgavathas



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- vishayAntharam – worldly pleasures – i.e., anything other than kainkaryam
- dhEvathAntharam – True dhEva is Srlman nArAyaNan. Any Other jlvAthmA who may be confused to be dhEva is dhEvathAntharam (there are many jlvAthmAs who are appointed by bhagavAn for the smooth functioning of this material world. They are also bound in this world by karma).
- svagatha svIkAram – us accepting bhagavAn/AchArya (tinge of I – ahankAram)
- paragatha svIkAram – bhagavAn/AchArya accepting us out of his own desire without being asked/compelled
- nirhEthuka krupA – causeless mercy – constant mercy of bhagavAn that is not instigated by jlvAthmA
- sahEthuka krupA – jlvAthmA's self-efforts instigating emperumAn's mercy
- nithya – nithya sUri(s) who serve emperumAn in paramapadham (and wherever else he is) – nithya is always pure and have been eternally free.
- muktha – one who was bound in this material world but eventually reached paramapadham and thus became pure and servitor of bhagavAn
- badhdha – one who is bound in this material world currently. Also known as samsAri.
- mumukshu – one who desires mOksham
- prapanna – one who is surrendered to emperumAn – similar to mumukshu
  - Artha prapanna – one who wants to be relieved from the sorrows of material world at once
  - dhruvtha prapanna – one who is surrendered but can serve bhagavAn and bhAgavathas in this material world for some time and eventually wanting to serve in paramapadham
- thIrtham – holy water
- SrlpAdha thIrtham – charaNAmrutham – water that was used to wash the lotus feet of AchAryas
- bhOgam – food (or anything) that is ready to be offered to bhagavAn

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- prasAdham – food (or anything) that is offered to bhagavAn and that can be subsequently consumed by SrlvaishNavas
- uchchishtam – another term for prasAdham (also means food remnants), at times it could just mean contaminated (food touched by the lips of others) – depends on the context
- padi – a term used for bhOgam
- sAththupadi – sandalwood paste
- SatAri, Srl SatakOpam, etc – lotus feet of Srlman nArAyaNa. nammAzhwAr is called Srl satakOpam since he is considered to be the lotus feet of emperumAn.
- madhurakavigal – lotus feet of nammAzhwAr
- Srl rAmAnujam – lotus feet of nammAzhwAr at AzhwAr thirunagari
- Srl rAmAnujam – lotus feet of all AzhwArs
- mudhaliyAndAn – lotus feet of Srl rAmAnuja
- ponnadiyAm senkamalam – lotus feet of mAmunigaL
- Usually confident sishya is considered to be lotus feet. For example, parAsara bhattar is the lotus feet of embAr, nanjlyar is the lotus feet of bhattar, nampiLLai is the lotus feet of nanjlyar, etc.
- vibhUthi – wealth/opulence
- nithya vibhUthi (paramapadham/Srlvaikuntam – spiritual world)
- leelA vibhUthi (samsAram – material world where we live currently)
- adiyEn, dhAsan – addressing oneself in a humble way (replacement for I) – humble self
- dhEvarIr, dhEvar, SrlmAn – addressing another SrlvaishNava – your grace
- ezhundharaLuthal – coming, sitting
- kaN vaLaruthal – sleeping
- nIrAttam – bathing
- sayanam – lying down
- SrlpAdham – carrying bhagavAn/AzhwAr/AchAryas in a palanquin

- thiruvadi – lotus feet (can also mean hanumAn)
- vyAkyAnam – commentary
- upanyAsam – lecture
- kAlakshEpam – lecture with line by line reading of source text and giving explanation based on the original text
- ashta dhik gajas – 8 AchAryas established by maNavALa mAmunigaL to initiate disciples into SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam and to propagate the sath sampradhAyam far and wide
- 74 simhAsanAdhipathis – 74 AchAryas established by Srl rAmAnuja to initiate disciples into SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam and to propagate the sath sampradhAyam far and wide

### Philosophy related terms

- visishtAdhvaitham – philosophy which explains one supreme brahmam (bhagavAn) with chith (sentients) and achith (insentients) as his body/attributes
- sidhAntham – our principle
- mithunam – couple – perumAL and pirAtti
- EkAyanam – Accepting supremacy of nArAyaNa without giving due importance to his Sriya:pathithvam (that he is the master of Srl mahAlakshmi)
- mAyAvAdham – philosophy which explains singular brahmam with everything else observable as illusion
- Asthika – One who accepts SAsthram (see above for definition) as pramANam
- nAsthika – One who rejects SAsthram
- bAhya – One who rejects SAsthram
- kudhrushti – One who accepts SAsthram but misinterprets that to his convenience
- Aptha – trustworthy source
- pramA – valid knowledge
- pramEyam – object of valid knowledge
- pramAthA – deliverer of valid knowledge

- pramANam – means to acquire valid knowledge
  - prathyaksham – senses (ears, eyes, etc) which help direct observation
  - anumAnam – knowledge derived based on previous observations
  - Sabdham – Words of SAsthram/trustworthy source
- thathva thrayam – three realities/entities which must be clearly understood by prapannas. Please see <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/p/thathva-thrayam.html> for more details.
  - chith, chEthanam, jlvAthmA – soul, sentient being
  - achith, achEthanam, prakruthi – matter, insentient being
  - ISwara – bhagavAn Srlman nArAyaNan
- rahasya thrayam – three confidential manthrams/matters – instructed by AchArya during pancha samskAram. Please see <http://ponnadi.blogspot.com/2015/12/rahasya-thrayam.html> for more details.
  - thirumanthram – ashtAkshara mahA manthram
  - dhvayam – dhvaya mahA manthram
  - charama sIOkam – Generally refers to sarva dharmAn parithyajya githA sIOkam. There is also rAma charama sIOkam (sakrudhEva prapannAya) and varAha charama sIOkam (sthithE manasi).
- artha panchakam – five essential principles- instructed by AchArya during pancha samskAram. Please see <http://ponnadi.blogspot.com/2015/12/artha-panchakam.html> for more details.
  - jlvAthmA – sentient beings
  - paramAthmA – bhagavAn
  - upEyam, prApyam – goal to achieve – kainkaryam
  - upAyam – means/way to achieve the goal
  - virOdhi – hurdles in achieving the goal
- AkAra thrayam – the three essential positions/qualities every jlvAthmA should have
  - ananya SEshathvam – Accepting bhagavAn as the only master

- ananya SaraNathvam – Accepting bhagavAn as the only refuge
- ananya bhOgyathvam – While normally its explained as “enjoying bhagavAn only”, the top-most principle is “Accepting bhagavAn as the only enjoyer” i.e., “being enjoyed by bhagavAn only”
- sAmAnAdhikaraNyam – sAmAnAdhikaraNyam means more than one aspect/attribute having one common substratum. It also means two or more words focussed on explaining a single entity. A simple example is mrudh gatam (clay pot). This talks about gatam (pot) being the substratum and having two attributes – being made of mrudh (soil/clay) and gatathvam (being a pot). Another example is “Sukla: pata:” (white cloth). This talks about patam (cloth) being the substratum and having two attributes – Sukla (white color) and patathvam (being a cloth). Similarly, brahmam/bhagavAn being the substratum of all entities is explained through this principle of sAmAnAdhikaraNyam. This is a separate and detailed subject which can be learned from scholars who are well versed in samskrutha vyAkaraNam and vEdhAntham.
- vaiyadhikaraNyam – vaiyadhikaraNyam means two or more aspects having different substratum. For example, a chair may be held by the earth and a flower pot may be held by a table. It also means two or more words that are focussed on explaining different entities.
- samashti Srushti – bhagavAn performs creation upto pancha bhUthams (five elements) and appoints a jIvAthmA as brahmA. Upto this stage, it is called samashti srushti.
- vyashti Srushti – bhagavAn empowers brahmA, rishis, etc., (by being the antharyAmi) to create variegated forms of entities. This stage is called vyashti srushti.
  - vyashti samhAram – bhagavAn empowers rudhran (Siva), agni, etc., (by being the antharyAmi) to annihilate the material existence.
  - samashti samhAram – bhagavAn consuming the five elements and the remaining entities himself.

## 2. Introduction



SrIman nArAyaNan, for the upliftment of the samsAris (bound souls), out of his causeless mercy, reveals the SAsthram (vEdham) to brahmA during Srushti (creation). vEdham is the ultimate pramANam for vaidhikas. A pramAthA (AchAryan) can determine the pramEyam (emperumAn) only through pramANam (SAsthram). Just like emperumAn has akila hEya prathyanIrkathvam (opposite to all bad qualities) and kalyANaikathAnathvam (abode of all auspicious qualities) which differentiate emperumAn from every other entity, vEdham has the following important qualities (that differentiate it from other pramANams):

- apaurushEyathvam - not created by any individual (at the outset of every creation, emperumAn teaches vEdham to brahmA who in turn propagates the same). Hence errors of individual's sense-perception etc., are absent.
- nithyam - it is eternal - with no beginning and no end - it is revealed time and again by emperumAn who is fully cognizant of the contents of vEdham.

- svatha prAmANYathvam - all vEdha vAkyams are self-sufficient, i.e., we don't need anything more to prove the validity of the same.

While vEdham is just one vast body of scripture, vEdha vyAsa, considering the limited capacity of human intelligence in the future, divided the vEdham into rig, yajur, sAma and atharva vEdhams.

vEdhAntham is the essence of vEdham. vEdhAntham is the collection of upanishadhs which talks about the intricate details about emperumAn. While vEdham talks about the process of worship, vEdhAntham talks about bhagavAn who is the object of worship. There are many upanishadhs, but the following are considered as the most important:

- aitharEya
- bruhadhAraNyaka
- chAndhOgya
- isha
- kEna
- kathA
- kaushIdhiki
- mahA nArAyaNa
- mAndukya
- muNdaka
- prashNa
- subhAla
- svEthasvathAra
- thaiththriya

brahma sUthram that is compiled by sage vEdha vyAsa is also considered to be part of vEdhAntham since it is the essence of upanishadhs.

Since, vEdham is anantham (endless - huge) and vEdhAntham is very complicated and the capacity of human intelligence is limited (which can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations), we



## Simple Guide to SrlvaishNavam

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have to understand vEdham/vEdhAntham through smruthi, ithihAsam and purANams.

- smruthi is the collection of dharma SASThrams which are compiled by great sages like manu, vishNu hAritha, yAgyavalkya, etc.
- ithihAsams are the collection of Srl rAmAyaNam and mahAbhArtham - the two great epics. Srl rAmAyaNam is considered as the sharaNagathi SASThram and mAhAbhAratham is considered as panchamO vEdham (fifth vEdham after the rig, yajur, sAma and atharva vEdhams).
- purANams are the collection of 18 main purANams (brahma purANam, padhma purANam, vishNu purANam, etc) and many upa (minor) purANams which are compiled by brahmA. Of these 18 purANams, brahmA himself declares that when he is in the mode of sathvam (goodness) he glorifies vishNu, in the mode of rajas (passion) he glorifies himself and in the mode of thamas (ignorance) he glorifies Siva, agni, etc.

Even with the existence of all of these, instead of gaining true knowledge through SASThram and looking out for the true goal, samsAris were still engaged in materialistic aspirations. emperumAn then personally descended as many avathArams, only to see many disrespecting him and even fighting with him. Realizing that he should prepare a jIvAthmA to help the samsAris (like a deer is used to capture another deer by a hunter), he picked a select few jIvAthmAs and gave them blemishless divine knowledge. These jIvAthmAs became to be famously known as AzhwArs (ones who are immersed in bhagavath anubhavam). They are headed by nammAzhwAr (prapanna kula kUtasthar/vaishNava kulapathi) and are said to be 10 in number - poigai AzhwAr, bhUthaththAzhwAr, pEyAzhwAr, thirumazhisai AzhwAr, nammAzhwAr, kulaSEkara AzhwAr, periyAzhwAr, thoNdaradippodi AzhwAr, thiruppanAzhwAr and thirumangai AzhwAr. madhurakavi

AzhwAr (disciple of nammAzhwAr) and ANdAL (daughter of periyAzhwAr) are also added into AzhwArs goshti at times. AzhwArs who were fully blessed by emperumAn preached the divine knowledge to many. Still, since they were immersed in bhagavath anubhavam their focus was on mangaLASasanam to emperumAn.

emperumAn, wanting to uplift more jlvAthmAs from samsAram, divinely arranged the appearance of AchAryas starting with nAthamunigaL and ending with maNavALa mAmunigaL (Srl varavaramuni). bhagavath rAmAnuja who is an avathAra visEsham (special incarnation) of Adhi sEshan, appears right in the middle of our AchArya paramparai and he leads this SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam and visishtAdhvaitha sidhdhAntham to great heights. Following the works of great rishis parAsara, vyAsa, dhramida, tanka, etc., he firmly establishes the visishtAdhvaitha principles. He establishes 74 AchAryas as simhAsanAdhipathis and instructs them to bring SrlvaishNavam to everyone who has the desire to learn about emperumAn and gain true knowledge. It is due to his great deeds and him being the ultimate saviour of all, this smpradhAyam became to be popularly known as Srl rAmAnuja dharSanam. Subsequently, He re-appears as maNavALa mAmunigaL to propagate the dhivya prabandhams and their meanings fully. periya perumAL accepts maNavALa as his own AchAryan in Srlrangam periya kOyil and completes the AchArya rathnahAram which started from him. After the time of maNavALa mAmunigaL, his main disciples, famously known as ashta dhik gajangaL (eight elephants) headed by ponnadikkAl jlyar further propagate the SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam everywhere. Subsequently, many AchAryas appear in this sampradhAyam and continue the great work of our pUrvAchAryas.

### 3. pancha samskAram



periya nambi performing pancha samskAram to Srl rAmAnuja

#### How do we become a SrlvaishNava?

According to our purvAchAryas, there is a mechanism through which one becomes a SrlvaishNava. This process is called "**pancha samskAram**" (initiation in to the sampradhAyam).

samskAra means the process of cleansing or purifying. It is the process which transforms one from an unqualified state to a qualified state. It is by this process one first becomes a SrlvaishNava. Just like taking birth in a brAhmaNa family makes it easy for someone to become a brAhmaNa by going through the brahma yagya process, taking birth in a SrlvaishNava family makes it easy for someone to become a SrlvaishNava through the pancha samskAram process. The beauty here compared to the brAhmaNa family example is, one need not be born in a SrlvaishNava family to become a SrlvaishNava - because SrlvaishNavam is associated to the soul while brAhmaNyam is just associated with the body. There is no distinction done based on caste, creed, nationality, sex, financial situation, family situation, etc - whoever desires to be put on the path of salvation can be included in this fold. Also, after becoming a SrlvaishNava, it is very important to completely avoid

any association with dhEvathAntharams (demi-gods like brahmA, Siva, dhurgA, subramaNya, indhra, varuNa, etc., who are controlled by emperumAn) and those who are associated to such dhEvathAntharams.

### pancha samskAram

pancha samskAram or samASrayaNam is the process that is explained in SAsthrAm to prepare an individual to become a SrIvaishNava. The following SIOka explains the different aspects of pancha samskAram - "*thApa: puNdra: thathA nAma: manthrO yAgAScha panchama:*". The five activities which happen during the pancha samskAram are:

- **thApa (heat)** - Sanka chakra lAnchanam - heated impression of Sanka and chakra on our shoulders. This identifies that we are property of emperumAn - just like a vessel is marked with the symbols of the owner, we are marked with the symbols of emperumAn.
- **puNdra (symbol)** - dwAdhAsa urdhva puNdra dhAranam - wearing of Urdhva puNdram (thirumaN and SrIchUrNam) in twelve parts of the body.
- **nAma (name) - dhASya namam** - a new name given by the AchArya (rAmAnuja dhAsan, madhurakavi dhAsan, SrIvaishNava dhAsan).
- **manthra – manthra upadhESam** - learning the secret manthra from the AchArya; manthram means that which relieves the chanter from grief - thirumanthram, dhvayam and charama SIOkam which release us from samsAram.
- **yAgA - dhEva pUjA** - learning the thiruvArAdhanam process to worship emperumAn daily at home.
- **Prerequisites**

Akinchanyam (considering oneself to be completely incapable/unworthy) and ananya gathithvam (having no-other go) are two important prerequisites before Surrendering to emperumAn. Only in such state, one can fully surrender to

emperumAn and let emperumAn uplift oneself.

### Goals of pancha samskAram

- As SAsthram says, thathva gyAnAn mOksha lAbha: - by gaining knowledge about the brahmam, one gets mOksha. By getting valuable knowledge from an AchArya in artha panchakam (brahmam - God, jlvAthmA - soul, upAYam - means to attain God, upEyam - the result, virOdhi - hurdles which are blocking the result) which is part of the manthra upadhESam, we become eligible to secure the ultimate goal - performing kainkaryam in nithya vibhUthi (spiritual realm) to Sriya:pathi. Also real knowledge is to accept oneself to be totally dependant on bhagavAn.
- While in the current life, performing kainkaryam to our AchArya and SrlvaishNavas (by doing in many possible ways) andarchAvathAra emperumAn - through thiruvArAdhanam at home and dhivya dhESa kainkaryam.
- It is also important to share this great message with others to help them to benefit spiritually. Srl rAmAnuja, as part of his main instructions, first instruct us to learn Srl bhAshyam, thiruvAimozhi and teach them to others.
- Here, the AchArya administers the divine union of jlvAthmA and paramAthmA. Though we are called prapannas at times, in real sense, Srl rAmAnuja and all our predecessors have shown that we are Acharya nishtas, i.e., one who depend fully on AchArya for everything. This pancha samskAram is also considered as the real birth for the jlvAthmA, since it is at this point, the jlvAthmA realizes its true nature and surrenders to emperumAn. It is because of this divine connection which is like the bondage between a husband (paramAthmA) and wife (jlvAthmA), there is constant emphasis of avoidance of other dhEvathAs.

So, as explained here, this philosophy of SrlvaishNavam is to leave this samsAram (material realm) to go to parama padham (spiritual realm) to perform uninterrupted kainkayam

to Sriya:pathi (Sriman nArAyaNan).

### **Who can perform pancha samskAram?**

SrlvaishNavam, although an eternal philosophy, was rejuvenated by AzhwArs and AchAryas. Sri rAmAnuja studied the SAsthram and re-established the norms which were lost over time based on the instructions from his preceptors - nAthamunigaL, ALavandhAr, etc. He established 74 simhAsanAdhipathis (AchAryas/spiritual preceptors) and authorized them to perform pancha samskAram to the individuals who understand this goal of life (leaving samsAram to go to paramapadham). Anyone who comes in those lineages can perform pancha samskAram. He (as well as maNavALa mAmunigaL) established certain Mutts (Monasteries) and jIyar swAmis (sanyAsis) whose lineages are also authorized to perform pancha samskAram to individuals aspiring to become a SrlvaishNava.

### **What should we do on the day of our pancha samskAram or samASrayaNam?**

- Wake up early on the morning.
- Meditate upon Srlman nArAyaNan, AzhwArs and AchAryas. This the day of our real birth – birth of knowledge.
- Perform nithya karmAnushtAnams (snAnam, Urdhva puNDra dhAraNam, sandhyA vandhanam, etc).
- Reach AchAryan's mutt/thirumALigai on time. Carry some fruits, vasthrams (clothes for perumAL/AchAryan), sambhAvanai (monetary) etc., whatever possible.
- Undergo samASrayaNam.
- Accept SrlpAdha thIrtham of AchAryan.
- Listen to AchAryan's instructions attentively.
- Accept prasAdham at the mutt/thirumALigai.
- Spend the day at the mutt/thirumALigai and learn about the sampradhAyam as much as possible directly from AchArya.
- Avoid rushing to office etc., immediately after samASrayaNam – reserve it to be a quiet and tranquil day filled with gratitude

for the guru paramaparai. Let this day be the beginning of many more such transcendental days.

### **Is pancha samskAram the beginning or the end?**

It is common misunderstanding that, this samASrayaNam is a simple ritual and is the end. But that is completely wrong. This is the beginning of our journey in SrlvaishNavam. The ultimate goal is set (to be engaged in eternal service to Srl mahAlakshmi and Srlman nArAyaNan) and the process is given by our purvAcharyas - accepting bhagavAn as the means through the AchArya and be willing to joyfully follow the principles outlined by the AchArya. It is most fitting for the true nature of every jIvAthmA to accept this principle, apply it practically in their day-to-day lives and be uplifted.

In mumukshupadi, sUthram 116, piLLai lOkachArya highlights the conduct of a SrlvaishNava (one who has undergone pancha samskAram).

1. Giving up all attachments towards worldly matters completely.
2. Holding on to Srlman nArAyaNan as the only refuge.
3. Having full faith in the accomplishment of the real goal (eternal kainkaryam).
4. Having constant craving to accomplish that real goal as soon as possible.
5. While in this world, spending one's time in dhivya dhESams being engaged in enjoying emperumAn's qualities and serving him.
6. Understanding the greatness of such devotees of bhagavAn who are having the aforementioned qualities and being joyful seeing them.
7. Having the mind fixed on thirumanthram and dhvaya mahA manthram.
8. Having great loving devotion towards one's own AchArya.
9. Being grateful towards AchArya and emperumAn.



10. Associating with sAthvika SrlvaishNavas (gentle devotees) who have true knowledge, detachment and peace.

For more detailed explanation of these points, please visit <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/08/srivaishnava-lakshanam-5.html> .

At this point, we should also be grateful towards bhagavath rAmAnuja who institutionalized this pancha samskAram in a grand manner and propagated the same through many of his disciples (74 simhAsanAdhipathis). All of that was done by him due to his overwhelming compassion towards all jIvAthmAs who are covered with ignorance in this material world and are shunning from their natural duty of performing mangaLASAsanam (praying for the well-being) to emperumAn. We will see more about this aspect in subsequent articles.

## 4. AchArya-Sishya Relationship

In the previous article we saw how pancha samskAram begins ones journey as a SrlvaishNava. We also saw the beginning of a unique relationship named "AchArya-Sishya" relationship. Since this is such an important aspect in our sampradhAyam, let us understand a little bit more about this relationship based on purvAchArya sri sUKthis.

AchArya literally means "one who has learnt SAsthram, applying it in his own life and teaching it to others". It is also said in the SAsthram that "even a sanyAsi, if he does not accept vishNu parathvam (supremacy of Lord vishNu), he must be considered to be a chandALan only". So it is imperative that AchArya must be a vaishNava - i.e. one who accepts Sriman nArAyaNan as the supreme god and is trying to please him every moment in his every action. Our purvAchAryas have insisted that one who performs the thirumanthra upadhESam (along with dhvayam and charama sLOkam) during pancha samskAram is the direct AchArya.

Sishya means one who undergoes SikshA (correction/purification). It is generally translated as disciple in English - which means one who is to be disciplined. Here the Sishya gets himself/herself shaped into a proper mould under the guidance of the AchArya.



udaiyavar – AzhwAn (ideal AchArya – Sishya), kUram

Our purvAchAryas have discussed the qualities of AchArya and Sishya in a very detailed manner. To start with they have established based on the Sasthram that AchArya-Sishya relationship is exactly the same as father-son relationship. Just like the son is always totally subservient to the father, Sishya must also be totally subservient to the AchArya.

In bhagavath glthA, kaNNan emperumAn says "*thadh vidhdhi praNipAthEna pari praSNEna sEvayA, upadhEkshanthi thE gyAnam gyAninas thathva dharSina*". This nicely summarises the qualities of AchArya and Sishya. In the first line, he says that "you should submissively approach an AchArya, render service to him with humility and ask him questions submissively". In the second line he says "the AchArya will teach you that gyAnam as he has understood the real thathvam (that is bhagavAn)".

Some of the qualities that are expected out of an AchArya are:

- AchAryas are generally equated to pirAtti (Sri mahAlakshmi) - their main job is to do purushakAram (recommendation as done by pirAtti) to emperumAn.
- Just like pirAtti, they should also accept that they are only subservient to emperumAn, they accept emperumAn as the only upAyam and their acts are for the enjoyment of emperumAn only.
- They should be full of krupai (compassion) - to accept Sishyas, develop their Athma gyAnam (knowledge about self) and vairAgyam (detachment), and involve the Sishyas in bhagavath/bhAgavatha kainkaryam.
- Per mAmunigaL's dhivya SrlsUkthi, AchArya must only be focussed on Sishya's Athma rakshanam (uplifting the soul).
- piLLai IOkAcharyAr says "An AchArya should have proper knowledge about self, Sishya and the result".
  - He should think that he is not the AchArya but his AchArya is the AchArya.

- He should think that his Sishya is not his Sishya but his AchArya's Sishya.
- He should think the result is to create a well matured Sishya who will constantly perform mangaLASasanam to emperumAn - nothing else.
- As explained in vArthA mAlai grantham and SishtAchAram (as in elder's practices), AchArya should treat his Sishya with great respect - since the Sishya has come to AchArya (without analysing the AchArya's qualities/capabilities) for total protection purely based on injunctions in SASThram.
- It is explained by our purvAchAryas that even emperumAn likes to be an AchArya. That is why he chose to be the first AchArya in our OrAN vazhi guru paramparai (disciplic succession). He also likes to have an AchArya for himself - that is why he chose the most perfect AchArya for himself - azhagiya maNavALa mAmunigaL.

Some of the qualities that are expected out of a Sishya are:

- piLLai IOKAchAryar says
  - Sishya should free himself from everything (i.e., aiSwaryam and AthmAnubhavam) other than emperumAn and AchArya
  - Sishya should be ready to serve his AchArya at anytime in all the ways
  - Sishya should feel mental agony by looking at this material world
  - Sishya should have desire in bhagavath vishayam and AchArya kainkaryam
  - Sishya should be free of jealousy when learning about bhagavath/bhAgavatha glories
- A Sishya must think all his wealth belongs to his AchArya. He should only take as much is required for him for dhEha dhAraNam (to run the basic livelihood).
- A Sishya should also think that his AchArya is everything for him as explained by ALavandhAr in "mAthA pithA yuvathaya: ..." sIOkam.
- He should take care of his AchArya's livelihood.

- mAmunigaL also explains in upadhESa raththina mAlai that "one should not stay away from his AchArya even for a moment when he is in this world".
- A Sishya should glorify his AchArya in his presence and always have upakAra smrithi (gratitude) for the knowledge that is given by his AchArya to him.

It is also explained that it is inappropriate for the Sishya to do Athma rakshaNam of his AchArya (i.e., Sishya should never perform svarUpa sikshai (corrections) to AchArya) and inappropriate for the AchArya to do dhEha rakshaNam of Sishya (i.e., Sishya should not expect that the AchArya will take care of his livelihood).

As explained by piLLai IOKAchAryar, it is very difficult to be a Sishya (and also we do not really understand to be a proper Sishya no matter how much we learn about it). That is why emperumAn himself took the form of "nara" rishi and became the Sishya of "nArAyaNa" rishi (who is an avathAram of emperumAn as well) to learn thirumanthram and demonstrate how one should be a proper disciple.

With this background, we can also try to understand the different categorizations of AchAryas.

### **anuvruththi prasannAchArya and krupA mAthra prasannAchArya**

#### **anuvruththi prasannAchArya**

During the days before emperumAnAr , the AchAryas were testing the prospective Sishyas for their level of dedication before accepting them. It was customary for a prospective Sishya to go to his AchArya's residence, stay with him and serve him for a full year before being accepted.

### **krupA mAthra prasannAchArya**

But when emperumAnAr saw the nature of kali yugam, he realized that if AchAryas are like this, only a very few will be motivated towards giving up worldly attachments and many will not be able to satisfy the demands of the AchAryas. So, out of his unbounded mercy, emperumAnAr relaxed the rules and gave this most valuable knowledge to those who had the true desire to learn bhagavath vishayam. So the qualification was changed from “deserving” to “desiring” candidates. He also laid the guidelines for his Sishyas to follow the same methodology and brought in several thousands of people into the fold of SrlvaishNavam out of his grace. Starting with emperumAnAr, our AchAryas are called krupA mAthra prasannAchAryas.

mAmunigaL, explains this concept wonderfully in his upadhESa raththina mAlai pAsuram "*OrAN vazhiyAi upadhESitthAr munnOr, ErAr ethirAsarar innaruLAI pArulagil Asai udayOrkellAm AriyargAL kURum enRu pEsi varambharuththAr pin*".

### **uththAraka AchArya and upakAraka AchArya**

In charama upAya nirNayam - a work done by nAyanArAchchAn piLLai, he explains these two types of AchAryas. This grantham establishes the glories of emperumAnAr very clearly.

### **uththAraka AchArya**

uththAraka AchArya is the one who is capable of taking some one from samsAram and placing him/her in paramapadham easily. It is explained that Sriman nArAyaNan, nammAzhwaR and emperumAnAr are the only 3 uththAraka AchAryas (Of course, maNavALa mAmunigaL who is yathi punaravathAram is also established as an uththAraka AchArya by erumbi appA in his varavaramuni Sathakam).

- Srlman nArAyaNan is the prathamAchArya (first AchArya) and being sarvagyan (omniscient), sarva sakthan (omnipotent) and so on, he can easily give mOksham to anyone.
- nammAzhwAr who was hand-picked by emperumAn to give knowledge to samsAris and correct them is also capable of giving mOksham to anyone. This is understood from his own words in thiruvAimozhi - "ponnulagu ALirO, bhuvani muzhuthu ALLro". He is asking the birds which he is sending dhUthu (as messenger) to emperumAn, that he can give both nithya vibhUthi and leelA vibhUthi to them as sambhAvanai (allowance) for their recommendation.
- emperumAnAr was declared as udaiyavar - the controller of ubhaya vibhUthi - by Srl ranganAthana and thiruvEnkatamudaiyan (SrlnivAsa – thirumala). Not only he was immersed in bhagavath anubhavam, he also lived in leelA vibhUthi for a long period (120 years) and served emperumAn's mission fully. He established proper temple worship, initiated 1000s of Sishyas, established 74 simhAsanAdhipathis to carry forward the divine message.

emperumAn acts purely according to SAsthram, he either gives mOksham or keeps the jIvAthmAs in the samsAram, based on the their desire and karma. So, nAyanArAchchAn piLLai concludes that uththArakathvam is complete in emperumAnAr.

nammAzhwAr, after receiving this knowledge, as he is an AzhwAr - even though he did parOpadhEsam (instructing others) a little bit, he got so immersed in bhagavath anubhavam and out of his Arthi left the material world at a very young age.

emperumAnAr with his parama krupA (great compassion) gave this benediction to anyone who desires and delivers them to emperumAn.



Thus, nAyanArAchchAn piLLai concludes that emperumAnAr has the uththArakathva pUrthi (completeness).

### **upakAraka AchArya**

He is the one who is capable of leading us to an uththAraka AchArya. In our sampradAyam, all AchArya paramparais coming under emperumAnAr up to our own AchArya are classified under upakAraka AchArya. Whenever we undergo pancha samskAram, our AchArya requests emperumAnAr through his guru paramparai to hand over that jlvAthmA to emperumAn as a person with the desire of leaving samsAram and reaching paramapadham.

Both uththAraka AchArya and upakAraka AchArya are equally respectable - though emperumAnAr has a special place in our sampradAyam. mAmunigaL in his upadhESa raththina mAlai starts with thiruvAimozhipiLLai and ends with emperumAnAr to show us the proper approach.

### **samASrayana AchArya and gyAna AchArya**

- samASrayana AchArya is the one who is performing pancha samsakAram to us.
  - gyAna AchArya is the one from whom we hear grantha kAlakshEpams, etc which develops our Athma gyAnam.
- While we are always indebted to our samASrayana AchArya and should be totally surrendered to him, gyAna AchArya should also be respected equally. For some, both samASrayana and gyAna AchAryas will be the same person. In fact, every SrlvaishNava must be respected as one's own AchArya as per Srlvachana bhUshaNam.

To summarize, a Sishya must depend on his/her AchArya totally. He/She also has the responsibility to take care of the livelihood of the AchArya. One must constantly be in touch with the AchArya

and also assist in his needs.

There were many wonderful incidents in our pUrvAcharyas' lives between AchArya and Sishya. We will see some of them here:

- maNakkAl nambi used to do menial services at his AchArya's (uyyakkoNdAr) residence.
- maNakkAl nambi took so much effort to bring ALavandhAr into SrlvaishNavam.
- emperumAnAr treated kUraththAzhwAn with utmost respect even though he (emperumAnAr) was the AchArya.
- Once when emperumAnAr got upset with kUraththAzhwAn, AzhwAn said, "adiyEn is emperumAnAr's property - he can do whatever he wants".
- embAr used to examine his AchArya's bed by lying down on it first. When asked if it is not a sin, he said he will not mind to commit such sin, as long as his AchArya's bed is ensured to be most comfortable.
- emperumAnAr says to ananthAzhwAn that parAsara bhattar is just like himself and should be treated the same.
- bhattar and nanjlyar had excellent conversations. nanjlyar gave up everything and became a sannyaSi. He said once, "if my Asramam comes in as an interference for my service to bhattar (his AchArya), I will break my thridhaNdam."
- nanjlyar encouraged nampiLLai's view points even though they were sometimes different from his own for some pAsurams.
- pinbazhagiya perumAL jlyar said he wanted to stay in this leelA vibhUthi just to observe/enjoy nampiLLai's (his AchArya) thirumuthugu (upper-back) while coming back from cauvery after bathing.
- kUrakulOththama dhAsar took so much effort to bring thiruvAimozhip piLLai into SrlvaishNavam.
- maNavALa mAmunigaL took thiruvAimozhip piLLai's (his AchArya) orders as his only goal in life. He learnt Srl bhAshyam once and gave lectures on it but then he focussed during the whole time in aruLichcheyal and rahasya granthams.
- Srl ranganaAthan with SrIdhEvi and bhUdhEvi listened to eedu kAlakshEpan from maNavALa mAmunigaL in front of his

sannidhi for a whole year and gave his own SEsha paryankam as his AchArya sambhAvanai and a thaniyan to his AchAryan which is chanted everywhere both at the beginning and at the end of any aruLichcheyal (dhivya prabandham) gOshti even today as per his order.

- maNavALa mAmunigaL gave his own seat, thiruvAzhi (chakram/disc) and thiruchangu (sangu/conch) to ponnadikkAl jlyar and asked him to do pancha samskAram for appAchiyAraNNA.

There are many such incidents but just listed some to understand how AchAryas and Sishyas interacted with each other in their lives.

## 5. guru paramparai

In the previous article we discussed the unique relationship between AchArya and Sishya.

Some may ask - "Why do we need an AchArya between us and emperumAn? Have there not been cases where emperumAn directly acknowledging and accepting individuals like gajEndhrAzhwAn, guhap perumAL, Sabhari, akrUra, thrivakrA (hunch-back lady in krishNAvathAram), mAIA kAran (flower vendor), etc?".

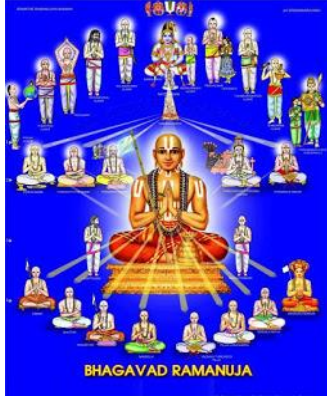
For this our pUrvAchAryas explain that, while emperumAn is svathanthran (fully-independent) and is pouring his mercy on jlvAthmAs, he is also bound to give results by an individual's karma. This is where an AchArya comes into the picture. emperumAn(out of his constant sukrutham (good thoughts) for everyone) is tirelessly creating opportunities for jlvAthmAs to ultimately reach a sadhAchArya (true preceptor) who will impart the real knowledge and prepare the jlvAthmA to reach him. AchArya being a recommendation authority like Sri mahAlakshmi (who is purushakAra bhUthai) ensures to emperumAn that the jlvAthmA is ready to give up worldly attachments and is purely depending on emperumAn's mercy to reach him.

It is said that while emperumAn will grant samsAram or mOksham according to one's own karma, AchArya will always ensure that the surrendered jlvAthmAs gets mOksham. It is also explained that going directly to emperumAn is like trying to reach out to his hands to hold on and going through an AchArya is like reaching out to his lotus feet to hold on (since AchAryas are his thiruvadi nilai - representing his lotus feet). emperumAn directly

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acknowledging jlvAthmAs are rare and him accepting jlvAthmAs through an AchArya is the most common/appropriate process as explained by our pUrvAchAryas.



Since we are discussing about AchAryas, it is very appropriate to understand our own AchArya paramparai. This will help us fully appreciate how we got this knowledge down to us from bhagavAn. Most of us will probably already know this, but still sharing this, since without this AchArya paramparai - we would also be like so many other samsAris in this world today.

SrlvaishNavam (also known as sanAthana dharmam) is an eternal sampradhAyam and many great personalities have propagated it throughout the history. Towards the end of dhvApara yugam, AzhwArs started appearing in southern part of bhAratha varsham at the banks of various rivers. The last AzhwAr appeared in the early part of kali yugam. In Srl bhAgavatham, vyAsa rishi foretells that exalted bhakthas of Srlman nArAyaNan will appear in the banks of various rivers and will enrich every one with the divine knowledge about emperumAn. AzhwArs are 10 in number - poigai AzhwAr, bhUthaththAzhwAr, pEyAzhwAr, thirumazhisai AzhwAr, nammAzhwAr, kulaSEkarAzhwAr, periyAzhwAr,

thoNdaradippodi AzhwAr, thiruppAnAzhwAr and thirumangai AzhwAr. madhurakavi AzhwAr and ANdAL are AchArya nishtars (fully dependant on AchArya) and are counted among AzhwArs too (making the count 12). Also, ANdAL is an avathAram of bhUmi pirAtti. AzhwArs (except ANdAL) are all jlvAthmAs hand picked by bhagavAn from samsAram. emperumAn gave the AzhwArs the most perfect knowledge about thathva thrayam (chith, achith, ISwara) through his own sankalpam (will) and through them he re-established the bhakthi/prapaththi mArgam when it was lost in time. He also made them realize past, present and future events fully and clearly. Azhwars composed 4000 dhivya prabandham (popularly known as aruLichcheyal) which were direct outpourings of their bhagavath anubhavam (experience with bhagavAn). The essence of aruLichcheyal is in the divine verses of thiruvAimozhi which was rendered by nammAzhwAr.

After the time of AzhwArs, AchAryas started appearing. Several AchAryas such as nAthamunigaL, uyyakkoNdAr, maNakkAl nambi, ALavandhAr, periya nambi, periya thirumalai nambi, thirukkOshtiyUr nambi, thirumAlai ANdAn, AzhwAr thiruvarangap perumAL araiyar, emperumAnAr, embAr, kUratthAzhwAn, mudhaliyANDan, aruLALap perumAL emperumAnAr, ananthAzhwAn, thirukkurugai pirAn pillan, engaLAzhwAn, nadAthur ammAL, bhattar, nanjlyar, nampiLLai, vadakkuth thiruvldhip piLLai, periyavAchchAn piLLai, piLLai IOkAchAryar, azhagiya maNavALap perumAL nAyanAr, kUrakulOththama dhAsar, thiruvAimozhip piLLai, vedhAnthAcharyar and maNavALa mAmunigaL appeared and propagated our sampradhAyam. This AchArya paramparai continues through the 74 simhAsanAdhipathis (authorised preceptors established by emperumAnAr) and jlyar mutts (established by emperumAnAr and maNavALa mAmunigaL) until today.

These AchAryas wrote several commentaries on aruLichcheyal, explaining the meanings of the pAsurams in great detail. These

commentaries are the greatest wealth they have left behind to us - for us to read them and immerse in the bhagavath anubhavam. The AchAryas, by the mercy of the AzhwArs were able to clearly understand the exact message in the pAsurams and explain them from different angles.

In upadhESa raththina mAlai, mAmunigaL explains that we are able to understand aruLichcheyal (dhivya prabandham) as it is only because of the existence of these commentaries (vyAkyAnams). If there were no commentaries, our aruLichcheyal would have also become like other thamizh literature (which are only learnt by a few elite group of people). Since our pUrvAchAryas understood the message, they made aruLichcheyal as part of nithyAnusandhanam (daily practice) at both homes and temples. To see it practically, we can visit thiruvallikENi dhivya dhEsam - during siRiya thirumadal gOshti on Fridays, we can see even 5 year olds and 6 year olds chanting out louder than the older SrlvaishNavas. Also, every one of us know thiruppAvai - everywhere, at least during mArgazhi month we can see even 3 year olds and 4 year olds singing the glorious pAsurams of ANDAL nAchchiyAr.

Thus we can understand the importance of our guru paramparai and cherish that every day.

To know more about our pUrvAchAryas in multiple languages, please visit <http://acharyas.koyil.org> .

*AzhwArgaL vAzhi, aruLichcheyal vAzhi, thAzhvAthumil kuravar thAm vAzhi* (Long live AzhwArs, Long Live dhivya prabandham, Long live those great preceptors who in-turn practiced and preached this divine work of dhivya prabandham) - upadhESa raththina mAlai 3.

## 6. dhivya prabandham and dhivya dhESams



Srlman nArAyaNan with Srl dhEvi (Srl mahAlakshmi), bhUdhEvi, nILA dhEvi and nithyasUris in paramapadham

In the previous article, we understood the glories of our guru paramaparaI. Now, let us understand the importance of dhivya prabandhams and dhivya dhESams.

Srlman nArAyaNan is the supreme God who is filled with unlimited and wonderful auspicious qualities. Out of his divine and unconditional grace, he blessed selected jIvAthmAs to become AzhwArs (great saints who preached pure and exclusive devotion towards Srlman nArAyaNan). Though He was the supremely independent master of the nithyasUris (eternally free souls) and mukthAthmAs (liberated souls), he wanted to rid himself of the one agony he had.

That agony is him suffering for the suffering of the bound souls in the material world. Him being the supreme father of every one, he was unable to bear the suffering of his children who are caught in the cycle of birth and death in the material world. One may



question, if the supreme God will have any agony/sorrow - him being sathya kAma (one who can fulfill all his desires) and sathya sankalpa (one who can accomplish anything). Our AchAryas have explained that him feeling the pain for the suffering souls is also his auspicious quality. Just like an all-capable father who is happily living with his one child will still worry for his other child who is staying away from him on his own and struggling, bhagavAn, though being all-capable, he is feeling the pain looking at the plight of the jlvAthmAs in samsAram (material world) who are suffering since time-immemorial due to being covered by ignorance and lacking of true knowledge.

To facilitate the upliftment of such suffering jlvAthmAs, he gives body and senses for the jlvAthmAs during srushti (creation), reveals the sAstham (scriptures), himself descends in to the material world as various incarnations like Srl rAma, krishNa, etc. Even after all of these, the jlvAthmAs are not really willing to learn the true knowledge and accept his supremacy. Just like a hunter will catch a deer using another trained deer, He decides to uplift jlvAthmAs through other jlvAthmAs who are already in the material world. So he chooses a select few of them, blesses them with divine knowledge and makes them AzhwArs. AzhwAr means one who is immersed in bhagavath vishayam (spiritual matters). These AzhwArs appeared in various holy places in the southern part of bhAratha dhEsam as foretold by vEdha vyAsa in Srl bhAgavatham. We have already seen about the AzhwArs in previous articles.



AzhwArs

AzhwArs compiled many pAsurams (verses) in glorification of Srlman nArAyaNan. These pAsurams total up to 4000 verses approximately and are thus called 4000 dhivya prabandham. dhivya means divine and prabandham means literature (that which captures bhagavAn himself). The various kshEthrams (holy places) which host bhagavAn in his archA (deity) form that are glorified by AzhwArs became to be known as dhivya dhESams. dhivya dhESams are said to be 108 in total. 106 of those, exist in the various regions of bhAratha dhESam (including Nepal). kshlrAbdhi (milk ocean) is situated within the material realm yet too far for usto reach. parama padham is the spiritual realm which is reached after liberation. Srlrangam is considered as the primary dhivya dhESam and thirumalA, kAnchIpuram, thiruvallikkENi, AzhwAr thirunagari etc., are some important dhivya dhESams. bhagavAn is said to have five manifestations - supreme lord in paramapadham, vyUha form in kshlrAbdhi, antharyAmi (as the in-dwelling super soul), vibhava (incarnations such as Srl rAma, krishNa etc) and finally archA (deity) form. Among these forms, the deity form is considered as the most magnanimous form of bhagavAn which is approachable by every one at all times. Our pUrvAchArys held the dhivya dhESams as their life and dedicated their life in serving bhagavAn and bhAgavathas in such dhivya dhESams. For more information, please visit <http://koyil.org>.

dhivya prabandham brought out the essence of vEdham/vEdhAntham in simple and chaste thamizh. The whole purpose of these dhivya prabandhams is to uplift the jIvAthmAs by transmitting true knowledge. Several hundreds of years after the time of AzhwArs, many AchAryas starting with nAthamunigaL, centered with Srl rAmAnuja and ending with mAmunigaL appeared and preached the divine message of AzhwArs. While less intelligent people considered AzhwArs pAsurams as simple thamizh songs, the most intelligent AchAryas established that these pAsurams bring out the ultimate philosophy of Srlman

nArAyaNan being the means (to be uplifted from this material world) and the goal (to be situated in ones true nature of eternal service to Srlman nArAyaNan in paramapadham - spiritual world). Our pUrvAchAryas fully relished the dhivya prabandhams and centered their life around learning them, teaching them and living by those pAsurams.



nammAzhwAr with madhurakavi AzhwAr and nAthamunigaL in either side

There was a dark period in the history where the dhivya prabandhams were lost in time after the time of AzhwArs. Eventually, it was nAthamunigaL who took lots of hardships to locate AzhwAr thirunagari which is the birth place of nammAzhwAr and he learnt all the 4000 dhivya prabandham with their meanings by the divine grace of nammAzhwAr. nAthamunigaL classified the 4000 dhivya prabandhams into 4 parts as we see today, taught them to his sishyas and brought out the importance of these dhivya prabandhams. He added kaNNinuN chiRu thAmbu into 4000 dhivya prabandhams in honour of madhurakavi AzhwAr who showed unflinching devotion towards nammAzhwAr.



Sri rAmAnuja

Sri rAmAnuja (emperumAnAr) who is considered as an incarnation of Adhi sEsha and who appeared a century later received the same through the guru paramparA by studying the same under various AchAryas per the desire of yAmunAchArya. He then spread the glories of AzhwArs and their works to all sections of the society and greatly facilitated the propagation of this SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam. It is because of his great contribution, this sampradhAyam was declared to be known as Sri rAmAnuja dharsanam by Sri ranganaAtha himself. Also, rAmAnusa nURRanthAdhi which was sung in glorification of Sri rAmAnuja by thiruvarangaththu amudhanAr was added into 4000 dhivya prabandham by the AchAryas due to his greatness. This rAmAnusa nURRanthAdhi is glorified as "prapanna gAyathri" - that which is to be recited compulsorily by all prapannas (ones who are surrendered) every day, just like how gAyathri manthram is to be recited by brAhmaNas everyday.



nampiLLai kAlakshEpa (lecture) gOshti (assembly)

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nampiLLai is an important AchArya (coming in the parampArA after emperumAnAr, embAr, bhattar and nanjlyar) who should be mentioned at this juncture. He was living in Srlrangam and was the leader of SrlvaishNava sampradhAyam during his times. It was during his period in Srlrangam, the meanings of 4000 dhivya prabandham were given great importance. He was engaged in giving lectures everyday close to the sanctum sanctorium of periyaperumAL - Srl ranganaAtha. It is explained that even periyaperumAL would stand up and try to peek through the window to hear his lectures. nampiLLai's sishyas also greatly contributed to propagate the meanings of these dhivya prabandhams. periyavAchchAn piLLai who is a sishya of nampiLLai and also known as vyAkyAna chakkaravarthy (emperor among commentators) wrote commentaries for all dhivya prabandhams and his contribution is greatly hailed by our AchAryas. vadakku thiruvldhi piLLai, who is another sishya of nampiLLai, documented the lectures given by nampiLLai on thiruvAimozhi and this document became to be known as eedu 36000 padi (the most cherished vyAkyAnam of thiruvAimozhi).



piLLai IOkAchAryar kAlakshEpa gOshti

After nampiLLai's time, piLLai IOkAchAryar leads the sath sampradhAyam and documents all the most confidential matters of dhivya prabandham in his rahasya granthams. These confidential matters were explained by various AchAryas at various times in various granthams. piLLai IOkAchAryar consolidated those

and documented them in his 18 primary works. But towards the end of his life, tragedy struck Srlrangam in the form of mughal invaders who destroyed everything there. piLLai IOkAchAryar arranged for the safe journey of namperumAL (Srl ranganaAtha - uthsavar) and escaped from the invaders from there along with namperumAL. Shortly in to the journey, he ascended to paramapadham due to the difficult journey through forests at such advanced age. Then came a lengthy period of suffering for the whole of SrlvaishNava community. After few decades, when peace prevailed and invaders were driven out, namperumAL eventually returned to Srlrangam.



mAmunigaL kAlakshEpa gOshti - "Sri SailEsa dhayApAthram"  
thaniyan submission

Finally, maNavALa mAmunigaL who is considered as an incarnation of Srl rAmAnuja himself, appeared in AzhwAr thirunagari. He became a sishya of thiruvAimozhi piLLai and learns all the esoteric meanings of vEdham, vEdhAntham and dhivya prabandhams from his own father and thiruvAimozhi piLLai. Under the orders of thiruvAimozhi piLLai (his AchArya), he reached Srlrangam and spent the rest of his life in rejuvenating the sath sampradhAyam to its past glories. He personally searched for all the lost literature, studied them, recorded them in palm leaves with great difficulty and preserved them for future generations to come. Fittingly, in appreciating his great qualities and efforts, Srl ranganaAtha himself

listens to thiruvAimozhi kAlakshEpam from mAmunigaL for a whole year and at the end of the lecture series, he himself appears as a small boy and accepts mAmunigaL as his AchArya and submits him the most glorious "SrlSaileSa dhayApAthram..." thaniyan. Subsequently, many AchAryas who came in various lineages taught and lived by these dhivya prabandhams.

Thus, AzhwArs' dhivya prabandhams which were focussed on the upliftment of jIvAthmAs which is to fulfill the desire of bhagavAn have been preserved by our pUrvAchAryas through the history. It is emphasised greatly that all SrlvaishNavas should learn the dhivya prabandhams, understand the meanings properly and live by them.

It would be very useful to understand the validity and glories of AzhwArs and their dhivya prabandhams. Please read the following articles which go through them in detail:

- part 1 - <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2013/02/dhivya-prabandha-pramanya-samarthanam-1.html>
- part 2 - <http://ponnadi.blogspot.com/2013/02/dhivya-prabandha-pramanya-samarthanam-2.html>

Please visit our dhivya prabandham portal at <http://divyaprabandham.koyil.org> for translations of various prabandhams in multiple languages.



## 7. rahasya thrayam - the three secrets

As part of pancha samskAram, manthrOpadhEsam (instruction of secret manthrams) is performed. In that, 3 rahasyams (secrets) are instructed by the AchArya to Sishya. They are:

- thirumanthram – revealed by nArAyaNa rishi to nara rishi (both are bhagavAn's avathArams) in badharikaSramam.



*Om namO nArAyaNAya*

Simple meaning: jIvAthmA who is owned by bhagavAn should exist purely for the pleasure of bhagavAn; He should serve nArAyaNan who is the lord of all.

- dhvayam – revealed by Srlman nArAyaNan to Srl mahAlakshmi in vishNu IOkam





*Srlman nArAyaNa charaNau SaraNam prapadhyE |*  
*SrlmathE nArAyaNaya nama: ||*

Simple meaning: I surrender unto the lotus feet of Srlman nArAyaNan who is the divine husband of Srl mahAlakshmi; I pray for selfless service unto that Srl mahAlakshmi and Srlman nArAyaNan.

- charama SIOkam (part of bhagavath glthA) – revealed by krishNa to arjuna in kurukshEthra battle-field



*sarvadharmAn parithyajya mAm Ekam SaraNam vraja |*  
*aham thvA sarva pApEbhyO mOkshayishyAmi mA sucha: ||*

Simple meaning: Give up all means completely and surrender unto me only; I will relieve you from all sins; do not worry.

Two types of relationships between the 3 rahasyams are explained by mAmunigaL in mumukshuppadi vyAkyAnam (while beginning to explain dhvaya mahA manthram):

- vidhi-anushtAnam (theory-practice) - thirumanthram explains the relationship between jlvAthmA and paramAthmA; charama SIOkam orders jlvAthmA to surrender

- unto paramAthmA; dhvayam is what is to be remembered/recited always by such surrendered jlvAthmA.
- vivaraNa-vivaraNi (detailed-brief narrations) - praNavam is explained by namO nArAyaNaya in thirumanthram. dhvaya mahA manthram explains thirumanthram. charama sIOkam explains it further.

Among the 3 rahasyams, dhvaya mahA manthram is greatly glorified by our AchAryas and is always meditated upon. It is glorified as manthra rathnam (gem among manthras). It is the one which fully/explicitly exhibits the role Srl mahAlakshmi as purushakAra bhUthA (recommendation authority). Also, uninterrupted service purely for the pleasure of Srl mahAlakshmi and Srlman nArAyaNanis explained as the ultimate goal. In varavaramuni dhinacharya, dhEvarAja guru (eRumbi appA) documents the divine activities of maNavALa mAmunigaL. In the 9th sIOkam, he highlights "*manthra rathna anusandhAna santhatha spurithAdharam | thadharththa thathva nidhyAna sannadhtha pulakOdhgamam*"- mAmunigaL's lips are constantly reciting dhvaya mahA manthram. His body is manifesting divine reactions due to constant meditation upon the meanings of dhvayam (which is nothing but thiruvAimozhi). It is to be remembered that dhvaya mahA manthram is never recited independently - we always have to recite guru parampara manthram (asmadhgurubhyO nama: ... SrlIdharAya nama:) first and then only recite dhvaya mahA manthram.

Many of our pUrvAchAryas, starting with parAsara bhattar (ashta sIOki), periyavAchchAn piLLai (parantha rahasyam), piLLai lOkAchAryar (Sriya:pathi: padi, yAdhruchchika: padi, parantha padi, mumukshupadi), azhagiya maNavALap perumAL nAyanAr(aruLichcheyal rahasyam), maNavALa mAmunigaL (commentary for mumukshupadi), etc., have explained rahasya thrayam in great detail. Among those many

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wonderful prabandhams, mumukshupadi stands out as the most precise literature and is held as the most important kAlakshEpa grantham (that which is studied fully under an AchArya) for SrlvaishNavas.

rahasya thrayam focuses mainly on thathva thrayam and artha panchakam which are of paramount importance for SrlvaishNavas to have a clear understanding.

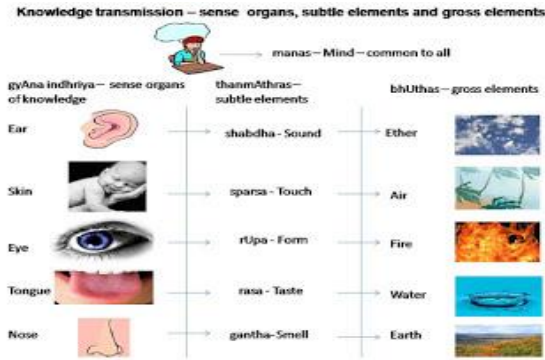
## 8. thathva thrayam - the three entities

Entities are classified into 3 main categories. chith, achith and ISwara.



chith constitutes the collection of innumerable jlvAthmAs that exist in both nithya vibhUthi (parama padham - eternal spiritual realm) and leelA vibhUthi (samsAram -temporary material realm). By nature, jlvAthmAs are made of gyAnam (knowledge) and have gyAnam too. Since true knowledge is always blissful, when the AthmA is situated in true knowledge, it is blissful too. jlvAthmAs are classified into three – nithyasUris (those who are eternally free), mukthAthmAs (those who were once bound in samsAram but are now liberated) and badhdhAthmAs (those who are bound in samsAram). badhdhAthmAs too are further classified into bhubhukshus (those who want to enjoy in this samsAram) and mumukshus (those who want to be liberated). mumukshus are further classified kaivalyArthis (those who desire for self-realization and self-enjoyment) and bhagavath kainkaryArthis (those who want to serve bhagavAn eternally in parama padham).

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achith constitutes the variegated collection of insentient objects that are visible to our gross senses. They are in unmanifested state after the period of total destruction and become manifested during creation. achith is also present in both nithya vibhUthi and leela vibhUthi. While, in general, achith (matter) covers the true knowledge in the material realm, in the spiritual realm it facilitates true knowledge. achith is classified in to sudhdha sathvam (pure goodness – which is mainly seen in parama padham), miSra sathvam (goodness mixed with passion and ignorance – which is mainly seen in samsAram) and sathva sUnyam (devoid of any goodness) – which is kAlam (time).



ISwara is Srlman nArAyaNan who is the supreme lord and the divine consort of Srl mahAlakshmi. bhagavAn which means

possessor of six qualities in full, the qualities being gyAna (knowledge), bala (strength), aiSwarya (control), vIrya (valour), Sakthi (power), thEjas (radiance). These six qualities further expand into many innumerable auspicious qualities. He is the abode of all auspicious qualities and opposite of all inauspicious qualities. All chith and achith rest on him and are also pervaded by him – so he is both existing within them and bearing them. He being the supreme master of everything, all chith and achith purely exist for his pleasure.

Similarities between the entities:

- Both ISwara and chith (jIvAthmAs) are sentient beings.
- Both chith (sentient) and achith (insentient) are properties of ISwara.
- Both ISwara and achith have the ability to transform chith into their own characteristics. For example, when a jIvAthmA engages in too much material activities, he too becomes like matter with respect to knowledge (i.e., becoming devoid of it). Similarly, when a jIvAthmA engages fully in bhagavath vishayam (spiritual matters), he becomes liberated from worldly bindings and becomes truly blissful like bhagavAn.

Distinctions between the entities:

- The distinguishing/unique quality of ISwara is his supremacy over everything else and He being omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, et al.
- The distinguishing quality of chith is having the knowledge about total servitude towards ISwara.
- The distinguishing quality of achith is being devoid of knowledge and existing purely for others.

Also read an introduction to piLLai lOkAchAryar's thathva thrayam rahasya grantham at <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2013/10/aippasi-anubhavam-pillai-lokacharyar-tattva-trayam.html> .

## 9. artha panchakam - the five essential concepts



bhagavAn (the ultimate object of attainment) in 6 forms -  
parathvam (in parama padham), vyUham (milk ocean), vibhavam  
(avathArams), antharyAmi (in-dwelling super soul), archAvathAram  
(deity forms at temples, mutts, homes) and in the form of AchArya

*mikka iRai nilaiyum meyyAm uyir nilaiyum  
thakka neRiyum thadaiyAgith thokkiyalum Uzh vinaiyum  
vAzhvinaiyum Odhum  
kurukaiyar kOn yAzhin isai vEdhaththiyai*

-- thiruvAimozhi thaniyan blessed by bhattar

Translation: The leader of the residents of AzhwArthirunagari –  
nammAzhwAr. His thiruvAimozhi which sounds like the sweet  
tunes of vINA speaks about the most important 5 principles – the  
true nature of the supreme lord SrIman nArAyaNan (parmaAthma  
svarUpam), the true nature of the eternal jIvAthmA (jIvAthma  
svarUpam), the true nature of the most fitting means (upAya  
svarUpam), the true nature of the hurdles which are in the form of  
infinite karma (virOdhi svarUpam), the true nature of the ultimate  
goal (upEya svarUpam).

artha panchakam means “Five concepts” (to be understood essentially). piLLai IOkAchAryar have mercifully compiled a divine rahasya grantham (confidential literature) which beautifully brings out these principles named “artha panchakam”. This article is a compilation based on that wonderful grantham. Let us see the highlights from this wonderful grantham:

- jlvAthmA (Self) – Further classified in to five sub-categories
  - nithyasUris – eternally free residents of parama padham (Srl vaikuNtam – spiritual realm)
  - mukthAthmAs – liberated souls who reached parama padham (Srl vaikuNtam)
  - badhdhAthmAs – souls that are bound in the samsAram (material realm)
  - kEvalas – souls that entered kaivalya mOksham (after being freed from samsAram) enjoying oneself (which is considered as very inferior in comparison to serving bhagavAn) eternally without any hope for serving bhagavAn
  - mumukshus – souls that are in samsAram but desiring for eternal kinkaryam (service) to bhagavAn
- brahmam (paramAthmA - God) – Five different aspects of bhagavAn are explained here
  - parathvam – his supreme form/aspect in parama padham (spiritual world)
  - vyUham – his form/aspect in kshIrAbdhi and his forms such as sankarashaNa, pradhuyumna and anirudhdha who are engaged in srushti (creation), sthithi (sustenance) and samhAra (annihilation)
  - vibhavam – Many incarnations such as Srl rAma, krishNa, etc
  - antharyAmithvam – He being the in-dwelling super soul. Two sub-categories – being the in-dwelling super soul inside the AthmA and being the shining form in the heart along with Srl mahAlakshmi.



- archAvathAram - emperumAn's divine forms in temples, mutts, homes, etc.
- purushArtham (goal) – that which is desired by purusha (AthmA) is purushArtham. Five sub-categories:
  - dharma – activities that are performed for protection/well-being of all beings
  - artha – earning of wealth and spending it for purposes that are allowed in SAsthram
  - kAma – Worldly pleasure in earthly planet and celestial planets
  - AthmAnubhavam – liberation to enjoy one's own self
  - bhagavath kainkaryam (parama purushArtham) – serving bhagavAn eternally (ultimate goal) in parama padham; that which occurs after giving up material body, reaching parama padham, acquiring spiritual body, surrounded by nithyasUris and mukthAthmAs
- upAyam (means/process) – Five sub-categories
  - karma yOgam – Engaging in yagyam (sacrifice), dhAnam (charity), thapa (penance), dhyAna (meditation), etc., which are ordained in SAsthram, acquiring control of senses through such practice, engaging in ashtAnga yOgam, etc., and realizing one's own AthmA (self). This will be ancillary for gyAna yOgam and will be mainly focussed on worldly wealth/control.
  - gyAna yOgam – Using knowledge acquired through karma yOgam, meditating upon bhagavaAn Srlman nArAyaNan who is seated in one's own heart and being in constant contemplation/penance on him. This will be ancillary for bhakthi yOgam and will be mainly focussed on kaivalya mOksham.
  - bhakthi yOgam – With the help of such gyAna yOgam, with constant meditation which leads to blissful experiences, eliminating the accumulated virtues and vices and finally having full understanding about the process and goal and acting upon that.
  - prapaththi – Surrender to bhagavAn which is very enjoyable, easy to follow, that which will bring immediate

result, and since it is to be done once, all other actions which are done subsequent to the first surrender become part of service to bhagavAn. This is also most suitable to the nature of those who are incapable of engaging in karma, gyAna, bhakthi yOGams and those who consider it improper to engage in such yOGams (once they realize their true svarUpam as an absolute servant of the Lord and hence any self effort (yogams) at self protection isn't proper for them). There are two sub-categories – namely Artha prapaththi (for those who cannot bear even momentary time in this material realm and wanting to go to parama padham immediately) and dhruvtha prapaththi (for those who live in this material realm in total dependence in bhagavAn and continue to engage in service to bhagavAn, bhAgavathas and AchArya in this world until reaching the ultimate destiny in parama padham).

- AchArya abhimAnam – For those who are incapable of engaging in any of the previously mentioned processes, the most merciful AchArya (spiritual master) himself voluntarily taking care of such individuals, teaching them the essential principles and guiding them fully. The Sishya (disciple) just needs to fully depend on such AchArya and obediently follow him to attain the ultimate goal. **Notes:** Here we can recollect Srl rAmAnuja as the uththAraka AchArya (saviour who can uplift us from this material world) out of great compassion and ones own AchArya as upakAraka AchArya (preceptor who can lead the surrendered individual to Srl rAmAnuja). Many of our pUrvAchAryas demonstrated this principle of fully being surrendered to the lotus feet of emperumAnAr as the ultimate objective. More on this can be seen in <http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/p/charamopaya-nirnayam.html> . Our maNavALa mAmunigaL too highlighted in Arththi prabandham that he desires to be like vaduga nambi who was totally surrendered to emperumAnAr.

- virOdhi (hurdles) – those aspects that block us from attaining our goal. Five sub-categories:
  - svarUpa virOdhi – Mistaking the body for AthmA, to be a servitor of some one other than bhagavAn and considering oneself to be independent.
  - parathva virOdhi – considering other dhEvathAs as supreme, considering other dhEvathAs at par withbhagavAn, considering such petty dhEvathAs to be powerful, considering incarnations of bhagavAn to be simple humans, considering archA vigraham of emperumAn to be lacking in ability/power.
  - purushArtha virOdhi – having desire for goals other than serving bhagavAn, having personal preference in serving bhagavAn (instead of following his will)
  - upAya virOdhi – considering other upAyams as great, considering surrender to be too simple to attain the desired results, considering service in parama padham is too great to be acquired (instead of having faith in AchArya/bhagavAn that he will bestow us that) and fearing for the many hurdles (instead of having confidence in AchArya/bhagavAn).
  - prApthi virOdhi – That which stops us from attaining the goal immediately – the relationship with the current body (which will naturally perish on exhausting the remainder of virtues/vices), Heinous crimes, bhagavath apachAram (offenses towards bhagavAn), bhAgvatha apachAram (offenses towards devotees), etc.

piLLai IOkAchAryar concludes in his artha panchakam that:

After acquiring knowledge about these five concepts, mumukshu (one desiring for mOksham) should follow the following life-style – earning within the limits of varNASramam and vaishNava ideals, offering all such earnings to bhagavAn/bhAgavathas and consuming/accepting only as much as required to maintain the body, serving one's AchArya who enlightened the disciple with

great dedication and should live to please him.

One should manifest humility in front of bhagavAn (thinking about bhagavAn's greatness), ignorance in front of AchArya (thinking about AchArya's wisdom), dependence in front of SrlvaishNavas (thinking about their lordship over oneself), differentiation in front of samsAris (thinking that we are totally surrendered and not have material desires like them).

One should have craving for the goal, faith in the means/process, fear for the hurdles, detachment and disgust in one's body, realisation in one's self, inability in protecting oneself, respect towards bhAgavathas, gratitude and confidence towards AchArya.

For one who has such knowledge and puts such knowledge in to practice, he is dearer to emperumAn more than emperumAn's own divine consorts, nithyasUris and mukthAthmAs.

## 10. apachArams to avoid



chANDili - garuda incident (When garudAzhwaR thinks about chANDili residing in a secluded place instead of a holy place, his wings burn down at once)

In this article we will understand the different types of apachArams (offences or misdeeds) that SrlvaishNavas should avoid.

For SrlvaishNavas, SAsthram is the foundation - we depend on SAsthram for every action we do. SAsthram means that which instructs us on what to do (vidhi) and what not to do (nishEdham). Primarily SAsthram instructs us to perform our nithya karmas (daily activities) and namiththika karmas (periodic/specific activities) and restrain from theft, attachment towards others' properties, violence, etc. Our pUrvAchAryas took the essence from the SAsthram and consolidated them for us.

In Srlvachana bhUshaNa dhivya SAsthram, in sUthrams 300 to 307, piLLai IOKAchAryar explains that a SrlvaishNava must be asakthan (incapable to do) in the following 4 matters:

- akruthya karaNam - not indulging in what is rejected in SAsthram

- bhagavath apachAram - apachArams in emperumAn's vishayam
- bhAgavatha apachAram - apachArams in bhAgavatha vishyam (devotees)
- asahya apachAram - apachArams in bhagavath/bhAgavatha vishayam which happen without any reason

Let us see one by one in detail:

### **akruthya karaNam**

SAsthram in general asks us to refrain from the following items:

- para himsai - giving trouble to any living being. even hurting a plant or small ant unnecessarily is not accepted in SAsthram.
- para sthOtram - our speech ability is provided by emperumAn to praise him and his adiyArs (devotees). It should never be used to praise avaishNavas.
- para dhAra parigraham - we should never think about others' wives with any wrong intentions.
- para dhravya apachAram - we should never take someone else's property directly or indirectly unless the owner gives it to us willingly.
- asathya kathanam - speaking what is opposite to reality/truth and what is not helping any living being.
- apakshya pakshaNam - eating food stuffs which has 3 types of dhOsham (defects) viz jAathi (by nature), ASraya (due to ownership/association) or nimiththa (specific reasons) - see AhAra niyamam ([http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/07/SrlvaishNava-AhAra-niyamam\\_28.html](http://ponnadi.blogspot.in/2012/07/SrlvaishNava-AhAra-niyamam_28.html)) for detailed discussion on this topic.
- many other such restrictions given by manu smruthi, etc.

It is important for a SrlvaishNava to first follow the sAmAnyA SAsthra vidhi and avoid the nishEdha vishayams.

### **bhagavath apachAram**

piLLai IOKAchAryar continues to explain the next nishEdha vishayam - bhagavath apachAram. He explains this in great detail

and mAmunigaL gives wonderful commentary for these. The following are listed as bhagavath apachAram:

- To consider emperumAn at the same level as dhEvathAntharams (other dhEvathAs) - for a SrlvaishNava it is paramount to understand that emperumAn is sarvESvaran, one who is the lord of every one (including brahma, Siva, indhra, varuNa, agni, etc) and he is the antharyAmi (one being inside everyone to control their acts). There is no one equal to him or higher than him. With that understanding, we should fully abstain from indulging in any relationship with dhEvathAntharams.
- To consider avathArams such as Srl rAma, krishNa, etc as normal or (even super) humans. One should understand that emperumAn appears in this samsAram (material realm) with all his qualities as in paramapadham (spiritual realm). As part of his leelA, he enters into garbham (womb) of a woman, being born on a particular day, goes through difficulties like vanavAsam (dwelling in forest), etc - but he is not bound by karma at all - instead all of these happen out of his ichchA (desire) to help jlvAthmAs who are suffering in samsAram. So, just because of these difficulties he takes up on himself, we should never think that he is also like other humans.
- To disrespect the varNaSrama limits - One should strictly follow varNa and ASrama rules and regulations. Because emperumAn says "Sruthi smruthir mama Eva AgyA ... AgyA chEdhi mama dhrOhi, madh bhakthOpi na vaishNava:" - He says that Sruthi and smruthi are his orders and those who do not follow them are his dhrOhis (traitors) and even if he is a bhaktha he will not be considered a vaishNava. In this particular case, mAmunigaL explains, fourth varNa SrlvaishNavas using vaidhika manthrams during thiruvArAdhanam, sanyAsis eating beetle nuts are some of the acts which are not allowed by SAstham.
- To value the archA vigraham (deity) based on the raw materials which are used to making it - we should understand that emperumAn out of pure love for his bhakthas, takes up the form which they desire. If we say that this is a golden vigraham and hence it is great or this is a stone vigraham or

just a picture and hence it is not good, it is bhagavath apachAram. This is explained in SASThram as questioning the purity of one's own mother.

- To consider the jlvAthmA as independent - our svAthanthriya budhdhi (independent will ignoring bhagavAn's will) is the main cause for all kinds of sins and this is explained as the biggest theft in SASThram. We should understand that jlvAthmA is only subservient to emperumAn and act according to that.
- To steal bhagvath dhravyam (things that belong to emperumAn). This includes stealing emperumAn's properties like his bhOgam (food), thiruvAbharanam (ornaments), vasthram (clothes), etc. Also stealing immovable properties like his land, etc., can be included here which are quite common these days.
- To help those who do the above acts of stealing.
- To accept those stolen properties from those who steal or help others to steal emperumAn's properties. Even accepting with the thought of "well, we did not want those, but they are giving it, so why not accept it" is not favourable to emperumAn.
- many other such behaviours that are condemned in SASThram.

### **bhAgavatha apachAram**

Primarily, it is explained that just considering another SrlvaishNava equal to oneself is a bhAgavatha apachAram - we should always consider ourselves lower than other SrlvaishNavas. In this section, piLLai IOKAchAryar very briefly explains that "bhAgavatha apachAram is that enmity which is developed in us against SrlvaishNavas, out of desire towards wealth and lust". But detailed explanation of bhAgavatha apachAram is discussed in Srlvachana bhUshaNam sUthrams 190 to 207. Let us see the essence of those sUthrams.

First we need to have some context on bhAgavatha apachAram:



- Those who have SrlvaishNava vEsham (dress, Urdhva puNDRAM, etc) but engage in bhAgavatha apachAram are like clothes which are folded nicely but burnt internally. When a strong wind blows, the cloth will fly into pieces.
- We also have to understand that emperumAn's avathArams like varAha, naraismha, rAma, krishna, etc and his acts in those avathArams are mainly due to him unable to bear such apachArams done by hiraNya, rAvana, etc., towards his own bhaktas. It is because of anguish in seeing the suffering of his bhaktas, he takes up these avathArams in samsAram. We can easily understand this from his own words on his avathAra rahasyam in the fourth chapter of bhagavath glthA in the sLOkams – “yadhA yadhA...”, “parithrANaya sAdhuaNam...”, “bhahUni mE vyathlthAni...”, “ajOpi sann...” and “janma karma cha mE dhivyaam...”. In their githA bhAshyam and thAthparya chandrikai, emperumAnAr and vedhAnthAchAryar have explained these sLOkams in great detail.
- There are also several types of bhAgavatha apachAram - discriminating/disrespecting a SrlvaishNava based on his/her birth, knowledge, acts, food, relatives, place of living, etc.

Out of these, discriminating/disrespecting based on a SrlvaishNava's birth is the cruelest one. This is considered to be even worse than valuing the archA vigraha (deity) of emperumAn based on the raw material it is made of (it is already explained that this is similar to questioning the purity of one's own mother).

The fact that we disrespect another SrlvaishNava based on any of the above is in itself sufficient to cause bhAgavatha apachAram. Our pUrvAchAryas have maintained such strict standards while dealing with other SrlvaishNavas. They were cautious all the time. For example, even an AchArya will treat his Sishya with utmost respect - that is the level of dignity they were maintaining. What we see today to some extent is total degradation - even the Sishya is not giving respect to his/her own AchArya and saying things like "well, he is not so knowledgeable.", "but he is also after money, how can I respect him?", etc. It is best for the Sishya to respect their AchArya and

let emperumAn guide the AchArya in his spiritual pursuit.

The results of bhAgavatha apachAram are also explained in detail here.

- thrisangu's example is explained here - He insisted to his AchArya (vaSishta maharishi) and subsequently vaSishta's sons to make him go to svargam with the existing body. Since they refused to do that he got angry and seeing that vaSishta's sons cursed him to become a chandALa (dog-eater). The same yagyOpavItham which establishes his brahma gyAnam, became the belt which chandALas wear. Likewise if SrlvaishNavas commit apachArams, being in a such high position (being a SrlvaishNava) any pApams/mistakes that they do will have the most severe punishment according to SAsthram - since they are expected to be very pure. Just like if the Prime Minister of the country is involved in some corruption - every one thinks so low of him, but if a common man is involved in corruption no one will care about that.
- thoNdaradippodi AzhwAr said "thamargaLil thalaivarAya chAthi aNthanNargaLElum" ("தமர்களில் தலைவராய சாதி அந்தணர்களேலும்") - even if a person is born in brAhmaNa family, had brahmOpadhEsam (instructing of gAyathri japam) and fully qualified himself in vEdham, if he commits an apachAram to a SrlvaishNava (who just understands the sambandham between emperumAn and himself but may not have any other gyAnam and anushtAnam), this brAhmana will become like a chandALa immediately. We should not think that even after doing so many apachArams to SrlvaishNavas we do not see anyone change their forms - the change need not be physical.
  - Even when garudan thought about chANDili (who is emperumAn's bhakthai) that, why she is living in a secluded place instead of a dhivya dhEsam, he immediately lost his wings.
  - When piLLaippiLLai AzhwAn continuously commits bhAgavatha apachAram, kUratthAzhwan corrects him in many ways highlighting the importance of avoiding such apachArams.

Finally, we should understand a very important point. As we understand/believe that, "we get mOksham purely by our relationship to our AchArya irrespective of our gyAnam and anushtAnam", the same way "we will fall down to the bottom of samsAram purely by our apachAram to a SrlvaishNava irrespective of our gyAnam and anushtAnam".

### **asahya apachAram**

asahya means without any reason. These are the apachArams we commit towards emperumAn, AchArya or SrlvaishNavas without any specific reason.

- In bhagavath vishyam - hiraNyakaSipu just did not want to hear about emperumAn - even though emperumAn did not do anything particularly against him.
- In AchArya vishayam - not following his instructions, explaining the knowledge he taught to unqualified persons in expectation of wealth, fame, etc
- In bhAgavatha vishayam - having jealousy towards other SrlvaishNavas, etc.

It is explained that each of these apachArams (in order) are more cruel than the one before. That is, bhagavath apachAram is crueler than akruthya karaNam (indulging in prohibited activities), bhAgavatha apachAram is crueler than bhagavath apachAram and asahya apachAram is crueler than bhAgavatha apachAram.

Our pUrvAchAryas were very respectful to SAsthram and were very fearful of committing any apachAram. Every AchArya in our guruparamparai (as we can see from their history), towards the end of their life in this samsAram, will gather all their Sishyas and other SrlvaishNavas and ask for their forgiveness even though they did not commit any apachAram at all. Such was their humility.

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For us also, it is important to understand this clearly, and try to apply in our lives. gyAnam (knowledge) exemplifies when it leads to anushtAnam (practice) - if that does not happen that gyAnam can simply be the called agyAnam (ignorance).

We should also understand clearly that this does not mean that SrlvaishNavas did not share their knowledge in SAsthram to other SrlvaishNavas fearing that it will cause bhAgavatha apachAram. If that were the case, we would not have so many granthams by our pUrvAchAryas and even contemporary AchAryas in our sampradhAyam explaining how we should live. The goal of these granthams is to educate us to develop these good qualities by reading them.

*SrlmathE ramyajAmAthru munIndhrAya mahAthmanE /  
SrlrangavAsinE bhUyAth nithyaSrlr nithya mangaLam ||*